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UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST
REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-first year

Letter dated 2 April 1996 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

For the last few weeks Israel, the Occupying Power, has been taking very harsh measures against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. Those measures include the demolition of homes, the confiscation of land and expansion of settlements, and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods within the Palestinian territory, as well as into and out of that territory. Such restrictions constitute a siege and strangulation of the Palestinian territory, the Palestinian people and their economy. (This specific issue is detailed further in the memorandum annexed hereto.)

We condemn all of the above-mentioned Israeli measures as violating the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which is applicable to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. They also violate various relevant Security Council resolutions as well as resolutions of the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations. In addition, those measures violate the agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, which were witnessed by the two co-sponsors of the peace process and other Governments. Such measures effectively threaten the integrity of those agreements.

Furthermore, several Israeli officials have indicated the intention of Israel, the Occupying Power, to deport a number of Palestinians. We strongly warn against such a measure, with its dangerous implications and consequences.

Also, Israeli forces have failed to comply with the relevant provisions of the agreements between the two sides regarding the redeployment from Hebron, which was to be completed by 28 March 1996. This is one of several areas of lack of compliance by Israel with provisions of the agreements between the two sides.

We call upon the international community, and specifically upon the Security Council, to exert the necessary pressure on Israel to cease all illegal actions directed against the Palestinian people, to desist from all such actions in the future and to scrupulously abide by all agreements that have been reached between the two parties.

The response to violence and hatred should not be actions of a violent nature directed at the Palestinian people as a whole. Further, combating acts of terror cannot be served by the pursuit of such actions and methods which undermine the peace process and the support for it among the Palestinian people.

I would be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter and of its annex distributed as an official document of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 42, 44, 84 and 85, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Muin SHREIM
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

ANNEX

Palestinian Memorandum on the Israeli Siege and Strangulation of the Palestinian Territory, People and Economy

Israeli policy and measures concerning the movement of persons and goods within the Palestinian territory, as well as into and out of that territory, are synonymous with the imposition of a siege on the Palestinian territory and the strangulation of the Palestinian people and their economy. This policy is much more complex than the initial perception of closure as that entailing the closure of the Israeli borders with the Palestinian territory. The following are the various aspects of such a complex policy.

1. Restrictions on freedom of movement within the Palestinian territory itself, cordoning off areas, including movement between towns, villages and cities.

In the West Bank, this aspect of the policy has recently been carried through in a way never seen since the beginning of the occupation in 1967. Needless to say, it has made the lives of the people unbearable, paralyzing daily life at all levels.

In the Gaza Strip, the Israeli army has obstructed the coastal road, interrupting its continuity. The army has also imposed restrictions on roads within the yellow area and has repeatedly imposed restrictions on movement along the main north-south road of the Gaza Strip. These actions directly violate the agreements between the two parties related to the Gaza Strip.

2. Interruption of the continuity of the Palestinian territory as well as restrictions on entry into occupied East Jerusalem.

The discontinuity of the Palestinian territory is the result of a lack of compliance by the Israeli side with regard to the establishment of a "safe passage" between Gaza and Jericho during the first stage of implementation of the agreements between the two parties and Gaza and the West Bank in the second stage. It is aggravated by the imposition, on a continuous basis, of restrictions on movement of persons and goods between the West Bank and Gaza, which are viewed as a single territorial unit by the two parties to the Declaration of Principles of 1993.

Israeli measures making Jerusalem off-limits to the Palestinian people and imposing stringent restrictions on their entry into the city have created enormous problems for them given the special status of the city as the religious, commercial and cultural centre for the Palestinian people.

The territorial continuity and smooth movement within and throughout the Palestinian territory is a sine qua non for the building of a viable Palestinian economy. By imposing an opposite situation, Israel is in essence negating all efforts towards the development and stabilization of the Palestinian economy.

3. Closure of the Israeli border to Palestinian persons and goods from the West Bank and Gaza and prevention of the entry of Israeli goods into the Palestinian territory or parts of it, as well as restrictions on the movement of foreigners between Israel on the one hand and, at least, Gaza on the other.

This closure has been the cause of great damage to the Palestinian economy since it is applied in most cases to both persons and goods, even those destined for or originating from a third party. It has become a source of extreme hardship for a large segment of the population, especially the Palestinian workers who depend on Israeli jobs. Throughout the years of occupation, Israel used Palestinian workers as a source of cheap labour on a large scale to augment Israeli economic benefits. Preventing those workers from reaching their jobs now constitutes a denial of Israel's continuing responsibilities until a different Palestinian economy is built. In addition, the closure is the cause of suffering and hardship in various specific fields such as that of medical service and treatment. The whole practice, while carried through by the Israelis on the grounds of security concerns, violates the agreements between the two sides and it is destructive and cannot be seriously justified.

4. Closure of the borders of the West Bank and Gaza with Jordan and Egypt respectively, including the movement of persons and goods which are legally being imported by Palestinian merchants, severing any links between the Palestinian territory and the outside world and effectively isolating it from neighbouring countries.

Such a measure terminates any existing trade potential and, coupled with the above-mentioned closure, it results in serious shortages in essential, daily living materials such as foodstuffs and medicines.

This outrageous aspect of the Israeli policy is totally contradictory to the agreements reached and has no relation whatsoever to the concept of making peace It is a way of bullying the Palestinian people and imposing Israeli will using military means.

In short, the above-mentioned measures of this Israeli policy have been causing great harm to the Palestinian people. Further, this policy constitutes a form of collective punishment of the Palestinian people and it is illogical and has no serious justification. This policy and its measures gravely violate the agreements between the two sides and seriously undermine the peace process and its future. They must be brought to an immediate end.